

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

CIEP-01 COME-00 EB-07 FEAE-00 FPC-01 H-01 INR-07

INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 OES-06 SP-02

SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 IGA-02 PA-01 PRS-01 /095 W

-----141940Z 046742 /65

O P 141813Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2054

SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

SOUTHCOM IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY

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STATE ALSO FOR AID; PASS COMMERCE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ABLD, AFSP, EAID, ENRG, MASS, PINT, SENV, SWELL, NU

SUBJECT: NICARAGUA REQUEST EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE IN POWER GENERATION

BEGIN SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED FORMAL REQUEST FROM HEAD OF NICARAGUAN POWER AUTHORITY FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO HELP COUNTRY OVERCOME CRITICAL POWER SHORTAGE DURING MARCH AND APRIL. INCREASED USE OF IRRIGATION AND DROUGHT-CAUSED LOW WATER LEVEL IN RESERVOIR FOR HYDROELECTRIC POWER GENERATION ARE MAIN CAUSES OF LOOMING SHORTAGE WHICH MAY LEAD TO RATIONING, BROWNOUTS AND BLACKOUTS; RATIONING COULD BE NECESSARY AS OF END OF JANUARY. NICARAGUAN ECONOMY IS ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO THIS PROBLEM. RELIEF SHOULD COME IN MAY WHEN ADDITIONAL THERMAL POWER DUE TO COME ON LINE AND SEASONAL RAINS SHOULD START REFILLING RESERVOIR. ALTHOUGH THIS CRISIS IS PARTLY OF NICARAGUA'S OWN MAKING, ALL PERTINENT ELEMENTS OF MISSION STRONGLY URGE THAT WASHINGTON AGENCIES CONSIDER WHETHER AND WHAT EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE MIGHT BE OFFERED TO NICARAGUA. END SUMMARY.

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1. ENALUF'S REQUEST: ON JANUARY 13, DR LUIS DABAYLE, EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT OF ENALUF, NICARAGUA'S SEMI-AUTONOMOUS ELECTRIC POWER AUTHORITY, FORMALLY REQUESTED THE EMBASSY IN WITING FOR THE LOAN OF A 10-15 MEGAWAT GENERATOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IN LETTER AND PREVIOUS PHONE CALL, DEBAYLE EXPLAINED THAT NICARAGUA FACES A SERIOUS POWER SHORTAGE, PARTICULARLY IN MARCH AND APRIL, AND THAT IT MAY BE FORCED

TO RATION ELECTRICITY AS OF THE END OF JANUARY.

2. REASONS GIVEN BY DEBAYLE AND ENALUF ENGINEERS FOR EXPECTED POWER SHORTAGE INCLUDE LOW LEVEL OF WATER IN LAKE APANAS RESERVOIR WHICH PROVIDES HYDROELECTRIC ENERGY, OWING TO 1976 DROUGHT; INABILITY TO USE CAPACITY OUTPUT OF NEW THERMAL POWER STATION AT PUERTO SOMOZA OWING TO PRESENT LACK OF ADEQUATE TRANSMISSION FACILITIES; AND INCREASED CONSUMPTION OF ELECTRICITY OWING TO EXPANDED IRRIGATION. ENALUF SAYS IT IS BUYING ALL THE POWER THAN IT CAN FROM HONDURAS AND HAS REACHED POINT WHERE PRESENTLY AVAILABLE POWER FROM ALL SOURCES IS INADEQUATE TO MEET CURRENT DEMAND AND WILL BE EVEN MORE INADEQUATE DURING CRUCIAL MARCH-APRIL PERIOD WHEN DEMAND EXPECTED TO INCREASE. RELIEF IS EXPECTED IN MAY WHEN NEW TRANSMISSION FACILITIES WILL ENABLE PUERTO SOMOZA PLANT TO DELIVER ITS FULL CAPACITY TO NATIONAL GRID AND WHEN SEASONAL RAINS SHOULD START REFILLING RESERVOIR.

3. DABAYLE'S LETTER SAID THAT THE VOLTAGE WHICH IS MOST COMPATIBLE WITH NICARAGUA'S POWER SYSTEM IS 13,800 VOLTS. HE ADDED THAT IF, HOWEVER, SMALLER GENERATORS (EACH HAVING A CAPACITY OF 5 MW OR LESS) WERE TO BE PROVIDED, SUCH UNITS COULD HAVE A GENERATING VOLTAGE OF 2,400-4160 VOLTS AND STILL BE LINKED TO THE NICARAGUAN GRID. NICARAGUA'S ELECTRICITY CHARACTERISTICS ARE GENERALLY THE SAME AS THOSE IN THE US, I.E., 60 CYCLES, 3-PHASE, A.C. THE FUEL TO POWER EITHER DIESEL OR GASOLINE GENERATORS IS APPARENTLY NO PROBLEM.

4. ALTHOUGH DABAYLE'S LETTER SAID ENALUF WISHES TO BORROW GENERATING EQUIPMENT, HE TOLD THE CHARGE ON THE TELEPHONE THAT ENALUF WOULD BE WILLING TO "BORROW, RENT OR WHATEVER" ANY UNITS THAT THE USG COULD SUPPLY. ANOTHER SENIOR ENALUF OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF THAT ANY NECESSARY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FINANCING WOULD BE NO PROBLEM BUT THAT THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT THE GENERATORS BE IN PLACE TO COVER THE CRUCIAL MARCH-APRIL PERIOD.

5. ENALUF OFFICIALS SAY THAT NICARAGUA HAS INSTALLED ELECTRIC POWER CAPACITY OF 250 MW WHICH IS THEORETICALLY SUFFICIENT TO MEET CURRENT DEMAND, HOWEVER, NOT ALL OF THAT CAPACITY IS AVAILABLE. NEWLY INAUGURATED THERMAL PLANT AT PUERTO SOMOZA CAN ONLY DELIVER 30 OF ITS 50 MW CAPACITY TO NATIONAL GRID SINCE PRESENT TRANSMISSION LINES LINKING THAT PLANT TO THE GRID CAN ONLY CARRY 30MW. MOREOVER, HYDRO-ELECTRIC PLANTS IN MATAGALPA AREA CAN ONLY DELIVER 14 MW OF THEIR RATED CAPACITY OF 100 MW OWING TO LOW WATER LEVEL IN RESERVOIR. ANTICIPATED DEMAND FOR POWER DURING MARCH-APRIL PERIOD IS BETWEEN 180-185 MW WHEREAS AVAILABLE POWER WILL BE ONLY 145-150 MW.

6. VIEWED IN TERMS OF TOTAL CONSUMPTION OF POWER IN KILOWATS HOURS PER MONTH, ENALUF ENGINEERS SAY DEMAND HAS RISEN MARKEDLY IN RECENT WEEKS, WITH INCREASED RECOURSE TO IRRIGATION APPARENTLY ACCOUNTING FOR MUCH OF HIGHER CONSUMPTION LEVEL. ENALUF HAS PROJECTED

DECEMBER 1976 DEMAND AT 82 MILLION KWH BUT CONSUMPTION REACHED 89. JANUARY'S CONSUMPTION SHOULD REACH 93 MILLION KWH AND REMAIN AT THAT MONTHLY LEVEL UNTIL APRIL WHEN IT EXPECTED TO REACH 99 MILLION KWH.

7. ACCORDING TO ENGINEERS, ENALUF INSTALLATIONS CAN PROVIDE FOLLOWING QUANTITIES OF KILOWATT HOURS PER MONTH (IN MILLIONS):

MANAGUA THERMAL PLANT	52
PUERTO SOMOZA THERMAL PLANT	15
CHINANDEGA GAS TURBINES	6
HYDROELECTRIC (SEASONAL MAXIMUM)	10
TOTAL	83 MILLION KWH

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 CIEP-01
COME-00 EB-07 FEAE-00 FPC-01 H-01 INR-07 INT-05 L-03
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TRSE-00 ACDA-07 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IGA-02
PA-01 PRS-01 ARAE-00 /095 W
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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2055
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SOUTHCOM IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA PRIORITY

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8. IN ADDITION, ENALUF PURCHASING 6 MILLION KWH FROM HONDURAS, THUS BRINGING AVAILABLE POWER UP TO 89 MILLION KWH PER MONTH. THIS MAXIMUM AVAILABLE POWER, HOWEVER, IS 4 MILLION KWH SHORT OF JANUARY-ARCH MONTHLY REQUIREMENTS AND WILL BE 10 MILLION KWH SHORT OF APRIL'S ANTICIPATED NEEDS. MOREOVER, WATER LEVEL IS APANAS RESERVOIR MAY BE SO LOW IN APRIL AS TO REQUIRE SHUT-DOWN OF HYDRO UNITS.

9. ENALUF ENGINEERS DO NOT CONSIDER IT FEASIBLE TO HOOK UP SHIP OR BARGE-BORNE GENERATORS TO NATIONAL GRID SINCE TRANSMISSION LINE FROM

PUERTO SOMOZA FULLY LOADED, LINE FROM PUERTO CORINTO CAPABLE OF HANDLING ONLY 4-5 MW (13.8 KV LINE), AND LINE FROM RAMA/LA ESPERANZA ON ATLANTIC SIDE IS OF EVEN SMALLER CAPACITY.

10. ENGINEERS WOULD HOPE THAT EMERGENCY GENERATOR UNIT(S) COULD EITHER BE BROUGHT INLAND BY SURFACE OR AIF. ROAD NETWORK FROM CORINTO ON PACIFIC, THEY SAY, WOULD BE ADEQUATE TO BEAR TRAILERS CARRYING GENERATOR OF UP TO 20 MW SIZE IN SECTIONS AND BRIDGES ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ROAD TO RAMA COULD BE EASILY BUTTRESSED TO BEAR SIMILAR LOAD. ANOTHER POSSIBLE ENTRY ROUTE WOULD BE OVERLAND FROM PUERTO CORTES IN HONDURAS. ENGINEERS SAY LARGE GENERATOR WOULD PROBABLY BE PLACED IN MANAGUA, BUT COULD BE HOOKED UP IN ANY MAJOR INTERIOR CITY LINKED TO NATIONAL GRID. SMALLER UNITS WOULD PROBABLY BE DISPERSED AROUND THE COUNTRY.

1. EMBASSY LACKS TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE TO JUDGE WHAT KIND OF GENERATING EQUIPMENT MOST SUITABLE, OR WHETHER IT POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE ON EMERGENCY BASIS, TRANSMISSION CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PUERTO SOMOZA AND NATIONAL GRID.

12. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF POWER RATIONING AND/OR BROWN OUTS COULD BE QUITE SERIOUS. IN ADDITION TO IRRIGATION, ELECTRIC POWER IS NEEDED FOR ALMOST ALL INDUSTRY AND FOR PUMPING OF POTABLE WATER FOR MANAGUA AND OTHER CITIES. MOREOVER, MARCH AND APRIL ARE NICARAGUAS HOTTEST, MOST UNCOMFORTABLE MONTHS. THUS POWER SHORTAGES WOULD HIT POPULACE AT ITS MOST IRRITABLE SEASON.

13. ENALUF IS NOT COMPLETELY BLAMELESS IN RE LOOMING POWER SHORTAGE. EMBASSY HAD HEARD AT LEAST TWO MONTHS AGO THAT POWER SHORTAGE WAS IN THE OFFING, BUT DABAYLE REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE PROBLEM AND TAKE PROMPT REMEDIAL MEASURES. INDEED, POWER SHORTAGE UNDOUBTEDLY COMES AS PERSONAL EMBARRASSMENT TO OCTOGENARIAN DEBAYLE WHO HAS BEEN SUBJECT OF MANY RECENT TESTIMONIALS ABOUT HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS ENALUF'S HEAD FOR PAST DECADE. (DEBAYLE IS ALSO PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S UNCLEML

14. IMPACT OF POWER SHORTAGE OF USG INSTALLATIONS WILL BE SUBJECT OF SEPTTEL.

15. THIS MISSION, INCLUDING ITS MILITARY AND AID COMPONENTS, URGES STRONGLY THAT WASHINGTON AGENCIES CONSIDER WHETHER AND HOW EMERGENCY AID MIGHT BE GIVEN TO NICARAGUA TO TIDE IT OVER THE CRUCIAL MARCH-APRIL PERIOD. USDOC MAY WISH TO QUERY US SUPPLIERS RE AVAILABILITY OF GENERATING EQUIPMENT ON EMERGENCY BASIS.
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RUBENSTEIN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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